

Editor's Note: Map created using Rand McNally Streetfinder Deluxe software.

They Spoke Volumes

By Jim Cox
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In her delightful treatise, *Tune In Tomorrow*, which gives outsiders an introspective look at the performers on radio's daytime serials, soap queen Mary Jane Higby recalls a geographical patchwork that offered opportunity for scores of artists to do their thing in several places throughout the day.

For awhile New York's Radio City, the colossal 68-story RCA Building was the home of *two* NBC Networks — the Red and the Blue. CBS, meanwhile, broadcast at nearby 485 Madison Avenue, plus from upgraded space purchased at 799 Seventh Avenue. To this triune could be

added the studios of MBS at the not-too-distant intersection of Broadway and Fortieth Street. These facilities provided a type of "triangular raceway" for the busy radio actor.

Substantial numbers of actors, actresses, and announcers, in fact, added up to \$30,000 annually to their bottom lines via freelance radio assignments, a tidy sum in the 1940's. Dashing from one broadcast center to another, often on the thinnest of time margins, they paid stand-ins to work rehearsals, hold doors and elevators and reserved taxis in advance. On their way to the good life, they were often living on a narrow edge as their voices boomed out of Atwater-Kents at myriad hours during the first half of the 20th century.

Continued on Page 3

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

Dedicated to the preservation of old time radio programs and to making those programs available to our members.

RHAC Board Meeting Thursday, August 3, 2000 - 7:30 PM

At

John Adams, 2811 S Valentia St., Denver, CO 80231

303-755-9185

Old time radio is alive and well in Denver!

KRMA Channel 6 Secondary Audio Program, RHAC's show *Tribute to OTR* Sunday 2:00 PM

KEZW 1430 AM *When Radio Was* weekdays from 7:00 - 8:00 PM *Radio Movie Classics* Sundays 5:00 - 6:00 PM

KFKA 1310 AM *Radio Memories* Sundays 6:00 to 12:00 PM

KUVO 89.3 FM *Destination Freedom* 3rd Sunday of the month 7:30 PM - **BROADCAST LIVE!!!!**

RHAC WEB SITE

The RHAC web page and catalog is on the World Wide Web:
<http://www.old-time.com/rhac.html>

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Archive Librarian Wanted

No Experience Necessary, Very
Low Activity

With the continuing success and activities surrounding the use of our reel-to-reel and cassette libraries, we have come up with a problem. That is, we are finding that we need to have our archival storage library managed better than it has been, or needed to be in the past. This library consists of approximately 600 reels arranged in 15 - 18 boxes.

The good news for the perspective archive librarian is that there is very little activity associated with this library. In addition, the archive librarian does not need any type of tape or audio equipment. Requests for tapes would come from the tape donations director.

It's estimated that it would take less than fifteen minutes a month to fulfill the duties of this low activity but important function. The issue is, that when an odd program is needed it must be available and accessible. As with all our other libraries, this tape needs be stored where it won't get moisture or particle contamination, and would not get excessively hot or cold. A basement storage area is preferred.

If you would be interested in providing this important service for our club please contact either, Larry Weide at (303) 758-8382 or lweide@ibm.net Maletha King at (303) 761-4139 or dickking@ecentral.com

ANNUAL RHAC PICNIC

Saturday, August 5, 2000 - 1:00pm

This year the RHAC picnic will be held at the home of Larry Weide, our Vice President. As usual the club will provide the paper goods, soft drinks and hamburgers with all the trimmings. All you "party goers" are asked to bring something to share, such as various kinds of salads, side dishes, deserts, etc. Please include serving utensils.

In addition to the usual RHAC picnic activities, you can also enjoy the Weide's swimming pool - remember to bring your bathing suits. Kids are very welcome, but parents and guardians must remain responsible for the children at all times - particularly because of pool safety issues, and the fact that there will not be a lifeguard present. There'll be plenty of shady places to sit, but you'll probably want to bring a folding or lawn chair with you. See you on the 5th of August - last one in is a rotten egg!

(See page on Page 7 for additional information and directions to Larry & Dorothy Weide's home)



By JoAnn Bantin

Dinner Theater

The RHAC *Players* have been enjoying a little summer but now things are starting to buzz. Thursday, July 20, 00 is the "Amulet of Nefertiti" opening at The Country Buffett at Villa Italia. Remember dinner is when you arrive, but in a reserved meeting room will be a regular meeting at 7:00 p.m. and the play directly following the meeting. **Please RSVP as soon possible.** Call Larry Weide at 303-758-8382 or email him at lweide@ibm.net. Please remember to bring your friends and make your reservations early to see our first produced original play by Larry Weide. It is full of intrigue, mystery, and action, see you there.

Other news includes several invitations for the *Players*. The Center for the Book has asked for several productions through out the summer for literary time at the libraries.

In the fall we have an invitation for some grade school productions. We will start preparations for meeting these goals. Also the next play for RHAC will be sometime in the fall and readings will be announced for "Arsenic and Old Lace," which will be directed by John Licht. There is a possible Sherlock Holmes play in the near future which again would incorporate both player groups. More on this later, in the meantime have a great summer and see all of you in July.

They Spoke Volumes

Continued from page 1.

Actor Staats Cotsworth is a typical example. Labeled "radio's busiest actor" in 1946, Cotsworth began his day with an 8:30 a.m. rehearsal for *Lone Journey*. The day sometimes ended after a repeat live performance for the West Coast audience of *Mr. and Mrs. North*, in which he played Lt. Bill Weigand. Between the two he would appear on several of the 10 daytime dramas in which he maintained running parts, although not all were concurrent. *Amanda of Honeymoon Hill*, *Big Sister* (he was the male lead for a while), *Front Page Farrell* (he was the best known actor in the title), *Lone Journey*, *Lorenzo Jones*, *Marriage for Two*, *the Right to Happiness*, *the Second Mrs. Burton*, *Stella Dallas*, and *When A Girl Marries*. Despite those, he was perhaps better recognized as the nighttime supersleuth *Casey, Crime Photographer*. And in his spare moments

Cotsworth turned up on *The Man from G-2*, *Mark Trail*, *The Cavalcade of America*, *The March of Time Quiz*, *Rogue's Gallery*, and various other series.

By 1948 *Newsweek* had put his salary in excess of \$50,000. Having earned the reputation as a Shakespearean actor, starting in the repertory theater of Eva Le Gallienne, why, then, would Cotsworth pursue a role on *Stella Dallas*? "Giving up a daytime show is like turning in your insurance policy," he sheepishly admitted.

Nor was he alone. Anne Elstner, the dowdy fictional matriarch who played Stella during an 18-year run, claimed she was appearing on as many as 10 shows per day! Scores of others, while not reaching that pinnacle, found opportunity to ply their craft within the geographical triangle sanctioned by Ms. Higby.

There was an additional ingredient that gave these copious on-air performers an inside track toward gaining freelance assignments. The serial producers were adamant in ordering that rehearsals be held to very short time spans, often no more than an hour. Their intention was to minimize production costs in order to increase profits. The producers on-site underlings, the directors, surmised that experienced actors, actresses, and announcers could help achieve those goals; certainly it would eliminate the time necessary to train unskilled novices in what was expected. Thus, a cadre of professionals matured, a core group of New York performers who spent their days buzzing from building to building while sensationally increasing their own net worth.

Who were these skilled artisans? Far more space than is available to us here would be required to identify them all. In researching material on soap operas, I have documented a measurable number. My intention was to publish a list of the 10 most active men and women on the air in daytime drama. That worked well for the men, but not so well for the women.

My list of the 10 most prolific male personalities, in descending order, based on number of series on which they appeared, follows.

- (tie). **Clayton (Bud) Collyer** and **Marvin Miller** (13 each). Both were equally adept at combining acting with announcing. Collyer was Proctor & Gamble's Duz pitchman for years on *Big Sister*, *the Goldbergs*, *the Guiding Light*, and *Road To Life*, plus *Truth or Consequences* Saturday nights. In *Kitty Foyle*, *The Man I Married*, *Pretty Kitty Kelly*, *Young Widder Brown*, and others, he acted, often playing masculine leads. Miller, best recalled by early TV audiences as Michael Anthony, the secretary who dispensed checks on *The Millionaire*, announced for *Ma Perkins* but was more prominently heard in running parts on *Backstage Wife*, *Judy and Jane*, *The Right to Happiness*, and *The Romance of Helen Trent*. On *One Man's Family* he was cast in more than 20 roles.
- James Meighan** (12). As Larry Noble, husband of Mary, *backstage Wife*, and *Just Plain Bill's* son-in-law Kerry Donovan, Meighan had a daily career before NBC microphones for years. But the busy actor also played male leads on *Dot and Will*, *I Love Linda Dale*, *Lora Lawton*, *Orphans of Divorce* and *Marie*, *The Little French Princess*. Beyond the serials he was best known in title roles as *The Falcon* and *Flash Gordon*.
- Joseph Curtin** (11). While he may be remembered by everybody as the male half of *Mr. and Mrs. North*, Curtin remained active in the daytime, too. He was male lead on *John's Other Wife* and *Second Husband* and acquired running parts on *Backstage Wife*, *Our Gal Sunday*, *The Story of Bess Johnson*, and *Young Widder Brown*.
- (3-way tie). **Staats Cotsworth**, **Michael Fitzmaurice**, and **John Larkin** (10 each). Cotsworth is profiled earlier. Like Miller and Collyer, Fitzmaurice was equally comfortable as announcer and actor. He narrated *The Right to Happiness* and acted on *Rosemary*, *Stella Dallas*, and *When A Girl Marries*. Larkin, radio's *Perry Mason*, played the male lead (Gov. Miles Nelson) on *The Right to Happiness*. He was familiar to the fans of *The Brighter Day*, *Portia Faces Life*, *Road of Life*, and *Stepmother*, and became the detective-lawyer-hero of early TV's daytime serial *The Edge of Night*.
- (3-way tie). **Ford Bond**, **David Gothard**, and **Larry Haines** (8 each). Bond was an announcer and worked all day. As the exclusive product spokesman for B. T. Babbit, he plugged Bab-O on *David Harum*, *Lora Lawton*, and *Nona From Nowhere*. He is recalled from stints on *Backstage Wife*, *Your Family and Mine*, and others, may be best remembered for *The Manhattan Merry-Go-Round* and a trio of musical programs sponsored by the Cities Service Oil Co. Gothard's most famous role was as perennial suitor Gil Whitney on *The Romance of Helen Trent*. He turned up on *Big Sister*, *The O'Neills*, *The Right To Happiness*, and *Woman In White*. In the daytime, you could find Haines in supporting parts on *Pepper Young's Family*, *Rosemary*, *the Second Mrs. Burton*, and *This Is Nora Drake*. At night, he was featured on *Gangbusters* and a gang of other detective series. He is undoubtedly best remembered for three decades as Stu Bergman for TV's *Search For Tomorrow*. While these gentlemen comprise the list of top 10 on-

air male personalities of daytime radio, there was at least one other presence in the studios about as often as they. **Arthur Hanna** directed 9 soap operas in addition to several nighttime series. Among his daytime wares: *The Brighter Day*, *David Harum*, *Front Page Farrell*, *Our Gal Sunday* and *Perry Mason*.

The "also rans" — actors and announcers with 6 or more daytime series, include: **Paul McGrath**, **Santos Ortega**, and **John Raby**, 7 each; and **Don MacLaughlin**, **Karl Swenson**, and **Ron Rawson**, 6 each. Rawson was a veteran announcer; the others were actors.

Determining the list of the 10 actresses appearing most frequently on daytime radio was more challenging than developing the masculine list for 7 names vied for ninth spot on the list. Thus, the top 15 women follow.

1. **Ethel Owen** (16). She was the unquestioned master, turning up on series throughout the Golden Age — *Betty and Bob*, *Helpmate*, *Houseboat Hannah*, *Lorenzo Jones*, *The Second Mrs. Burton*, *Today's Children*, *Valiant Lady*, and scads more.
2. **Gertrude Warner** (13). Close behind, she acted, narrated, and occasionally advertised on the series on which she was a part — *Against The Storm*, *Ellen Randolph*, *Joyce Jordan*, *Modern Romances*, *Mrs. Miniver*, and *Whispering Streets*.
3. **Joan Alexander** (12). *Lone Journey*, *Rosemary*, *Woman of Courage*, and *Young Dr. Malone* were in her repertoire. For years she played *Perry Mason's* associate, Della Street, and the heroine on *This Is Nora Drake*.
4. **Louise Fitch** (11). Playing feminine leads on *Road To Life*, *Two On A Clue*, and *We Love and Learn*, this character actress appeared in *Arnold Grimm's Daughter*, *Big Sister*, *Kitty Keene*, and *The Light of the World*.
5. **Charita Bauer** and **Leslie Woods** (10 each). **Bauer's** best known character for decades was, ironically, Charita Bauer, on radio's and TV's *the Guiding Light*. On the radio she in *Front Page Farrell*, *Orphans of Divorce*, *Our Gal Sunday*, and *Young Widder Brown*. **Woods** played feminine leads on *Road of Life* and *This is Nora Drake* while acting in *Bright Horizon*, *The Romance of Helen Trent*, *We Love and Learn*, and *Woman In White*.
7. **Laurette Fillbrandt** (8). *Bachelor's Children*, *Girl Alone*, *Midstream*, and *today's Children* filled her days and at night she turned up frequently on the detective dramas.
8. **Alice Frost** (7). Best known as the feminine half of *Mr. and Mrs. North*, she also worked many of the daytime dramas, including leads in *Big Sister* and *Woman of Courage*. Supporting parts: *Lorenzo*

Jones, *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* and *The Second Mrs. Burton*.

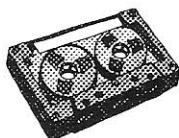
9. (7-way tie, each with 6 series, 1 listed). **Virginia Dwyer** (*Road of Life*), **Elsbeth Eric** (*Rosemary*), **Mary Jane Higby** (*When A Girl Marries*), **Teri Keane** (*The Second Mrs. Burton*), **Grace Matthews** (*Hilltop House*), **Mercedes McCambridge** (*Big Sister*), and **Joan Tompkins** (*Lora Lawton*).

In determining who the most prominent actors, actresses, and announcers of daytime radio were, there is another way of look at it. If longevity says anything — as opposed to being on the most shows — there are other notables whose accomplishments cannot be summarily dismissed.

Virginia Payne appeared for 27 years and 3 months in the title role of *Ma Perkins*, never missing a performance. As a heroine, even she may be exceeded by **Florence Freeman**, who played leads on *Dot and Will*, *Young Widder Brown*, *A Woman of America*, and *Wendy Warren and the News* for a combination of almost 32 years.

And were there men who hung around that long? Close. **Murray Forbes** put in 27 years and 3 months as *Ma Perkins* son-in-law, Willie Fitz, and nearly 30 years as male leads on that serial, *Lonely Woman*, and *Today's Children*.

The "triangular raceway" described by Ms. Higby in her book was a testament to the physically fittest. By being in the right places at the right times, a few radio artists obviously made hay while the sun shone, and as a result claimed fortunes that few listeners realized existed. **Editors Note:** Jim Cox is the author of the book *The Great Radio Soap Operas* published by McFarland & Company Inc. 1-800-253-2187.



New in The Tape Library

By Maletha & Dick King

This month and next month we are back into the Contributor's Library. We finish up the run of *Grand Marquee*. Remember these delightful shows that were so well-written and presented.

From *Grand Marquee*, we go to a series of *Gasoline Alley*, with characters based on the comic strip. Although this series starts with some rather poor sound, it improves as the series goes on.

From there we go on to some of the ladies of comedy such as Baby Snooks, Joan Davis, and Judy Canova. We had forgotten how well Judy Canova sang, but we never forgot Pedro. Comedy always takes two or more. We have gotten a couple of *Blondie* programs and a few *Archie Andrews* shows. The balance of the reels offered

is a mix-up of comedy shows, some of which made it and some did not. Back to *Blondie*, it was a great show on radio, but did not survive the try on TV, as was true of *Dennis the Menace*. There is something for everyone in the new entries into the Library. Hope you enjoy them.

Cassette Library #1 Address Error

Please note that the address for this library that appeared in last month's Newsletter was in error on both Page 2 and on the Order Form. The address should read:

Ron Gallagher
888 South Dexter #607
Denver, CO 80426

A corrected Order Form will be published in next month's Newsletter.

Did You Know That...?

This monthly column features little-known facts about Old-Time Radio. This month we feature the classic radio Western —

Gunsmoke

John Meston, the lead writer for *Gunsmoke*, grew up in Pueblo, Colorado. Meston's earlier "adult" Western scripts "Pagosa" (first aired on *Romance* & later on *Escape*) and "Wild Jack Rhett," (aired on *Escape*) helped lay the groundwork for *Gunsmoke*. The main character in *Pagosa*, Jeff Spain, provided the model for Matt Dillon.

Before settling on Matt Dillon as the name for the lead character, the names Jeff Spain and Mark Dillon were suggested. The Mark Dillon name was actually used in two unaired *Gunsmoke* pilots featuring Rye Billsbury & Howard Culver as Mark.

Once CBS executives decided to air *Gunsmoke*, the script and music were written and actors were cast; all in one week. Rex Koury wrote the main *Gunsmoke* theme in 10 minutes.

Only Conrad's character of Matt Dillon was originally considered a permanent character. The Chester character was originally just called "Townsmen." Conrad suggested that the character's name be changed to Chester; Parley Baer eventually supplied Chester's middle and last names: Wesley Proudfoot. Howard McNear's character was originally just called "Doc." Since McNear played Doc with a slightly ghoulish bent, Conrad named him Dr. Charles Addams after the creator of the "Addams Family" cartoons. Georgia Ellis appeared in the first *Gunsmoke* episode, but not as Kitty. The Kitty role did not become a permanent character on *Gunsmoke* until a few weeks into the series.

In addition to *Gunsmoke* having some of the best-known writers for radio - John Meston, Marian Clark, Les Crutchfield, John Dunkel, Antony Ellis, Herb

Purdum, and Kathleen Hite; several performers wrote scripts for the series. Harry Bartell and close friend Vic Perrin co-wrote two radio scripts. Perrin wrote three others by himself. Series star William Conrad wrote one script. Sound effects artists Tom Hanley and Ray Kemper wrote eight and three scripts respectively.

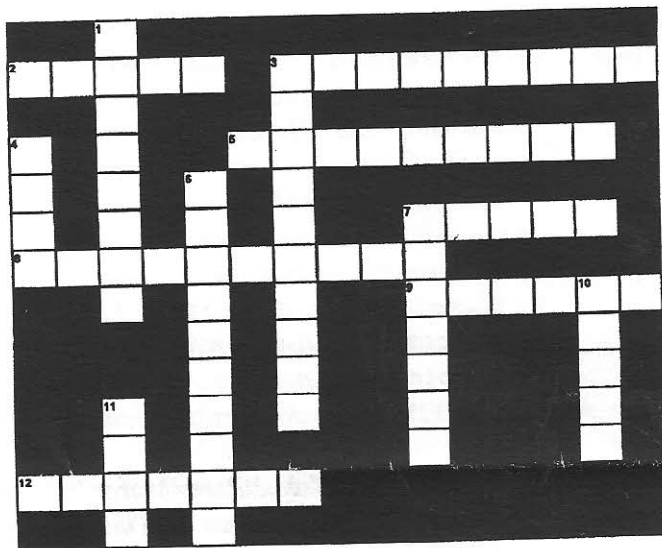
Norman Macdonnell frequently used a select group of very talented actors that became known as his "stock

Continued on the back page

Radio Crossword Puzzle

By Jim Johnston

© 2000 by Jim Johnston



THE RED SKELTON SHOW

Answers can be found on back page.

ACROSS

2. Red's sponsor in 1951 and 1952 was _____, maker of washing machines, refrigerators, and other major home appliances.
3. Along with Marcel Marceau, Red was later recognized on his television show as the best in the world in the art of _____.
5. Red's character Willy Lump-Lump was an _____.
7. Noting that Red was a steadfast entertainer of people in the armed forces, critics questioned his career curtailment in March of 1944 when he was "caught in the _____".
8. As portrayed by Red, Junior was a "_____ kid".
9. After popular appearances on Rudy Vallee's show, in 1939 Red joined the "_____ Time" program, sponsored by a cigarette company of the same name.
12. Junior's admission of guilt, "_____!" was a part of America's slang by 1942.

DOWN

1. Bandleader David Rose played Red's theme song "_____".
3. Red's character Cauliflower McPugg was a has-been prize fighter who saw birds and heard bells because he was _____.
4. Although presented differently on Red's television program, on radio _____ Kadiddlehopper was a singing cab driver.
6. Kadiddlehopper always greeted his girlfriend Sarah Dew with "Well, Sarah Dew, _____?"
7. According to John Dunning's book *On The Air*, Red's character _____, the Fastest Gun in the West, could "... fire without letup at a fly on the wall, blow down the wall, and leave the fly untouched."
10. On the Raleigh Cigarette Program, the bandleader's first name was _____. With his wife, he went on to create a successful radio show that made an equally successful transition to television.
11. When the Fastest Gun in the West rode into the scene, his first words were always "C'mon, horse, _____!"

FRIENDS OF OLD-TIME RADIO SCRIPT CONTEST

The Seventh Annual Original Script Writing Contest is now open. We would like an original 30 minute script

which must be based on any of the great radio programs of the past, such as *The Shadow*, *Suspense*, etc. The only difference this time is that they should not be a comedy. The script can have the characters originating in their original era and time or you can update the time to today. If you have entered before and you have not won in 2 years, please enter again.

The script must have all music and sound cues as well as all the spoken material. Try to arrange it in script form so it doesn't have to be retyped. The prize for the best script will be \$150 and will have its live performance at our 2001 Convention on Thursday evening after dinner. We would like you to attend our convention to participate but it is not mandatory. You can direct it if you wish. There will be some rehearsal time. Scripts must be submitted by September 1, 2000.

Send to:

Dave Zwengler
319 Plymouth Rd.
North Brunswick, NJ 8902
(908) 940-7639.

A distinguished panel of Old-Time Radio buffs including Arthur Anderson will pick the winning script. They must be very readable. All are eligible so please spread the word.

Past winners have been Michael Giorgio, James Nixon, Edgar Russell III, Donald Dortmund, Joel Senter and Arlene Osborne. This year's winner was Michael Leannah.

RHAC Annual Picnic

For Reservations or
information, call:
Larry Weide
(303) 758-8382 or
lweide@ibm.net

Directions to the Weide's place



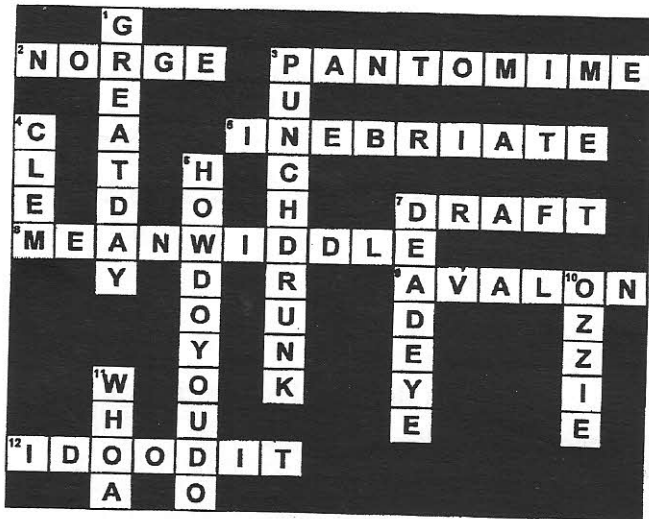
Get to the corner of Holly and Happy Canyon. Turn left onto H.C. and immediately turn right back onto "South Holly Way". Go the short block to Nassau Cir. and turn left.

Members' Meeting & Dinner Theater

Where: The Country Buffet at the Villa Italia shopping center, 7200 W. Alameda Ave., Lakewood Colorado
 When: Thursday, July 20th. See *RHAC Players* article on page 3 for more information.

Radio Crossword Puzzle

Answers



Gunsmoke

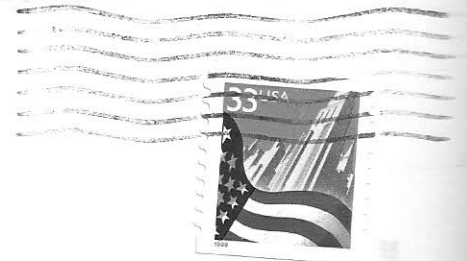
- Continued from Page 6.

company." In addition to his lead actors - William Conrad, Parley Baer, Georgia Ellis, and Howard McNear, included in the "stock company" were: Harry Bartell, Jeanne Bates, Dick Beals, Lillian Buyeff, Virginia Christine, John Dehner, Larry Dobkin, Paul Dubov, Sam Edwards, Virginia Gregg, Vivi Janiss, Joseph Kearns, Helen Kleebe, Lou Krugman, Jack Kruschen, Ralph Moody, Jeanette Nolan, James Nusser, Vic Perrin, Barney Phillips, and Ben Wright. These fine actors also appeared on Macdonnell's other radio series — *Fort Laramie*, *Escape*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe*, *Romance*, *Green Lama*, *Suspense*, and *Yours Truly Johnny Dollar*.

Editor's Note: RHAC has most *Gunsmoke* episodes in its libraries and also has the multi-hour 1976 radio documentary — *The Making of Gunsmoke*.

RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION of COLO.
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